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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA

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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN STRATEGY: SRI LANKA OFFERS  
POSSIBLE TRAINING ASSISTANCE

REF: STATE 29482

¶1. (SBU) Ambassador briefed Foreign Secretary Palitha Kohona on the conclusions of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategic Review on March 31. Kohona expressed appreciation for the detailed readout. With respect to how Sri Lanka might help, Kohona offered two thoughts. First, he noted that Afghanistan already had asked whether Sri Lanka might send education and health professionals to help train and build Afghan capacity in these areas. Sri Lanka has achieved some of the South Asian region's highest indicators in education and health. He also pointed out that Sri Lanka made a priority of rebuilding schools and hospitals after the LTTE was expelled by the military from eastern Sri Lanka. Kohona said Sri Lanka has signaled its readiness to help, but neither Afghanistan nor Sri Lanka have funding. If the US or other donors have funding, Sri Lanka would be ready to help.

¶2. (SBU) Recalling that President Rajapaksa had earlier indicated that Sri Lanka might be prepared to provide troops or trainers to Afghanistan as military operations against the LTTE wind down, Ambassador asked if the GSL was ready to consider providing forces in Afghanistan. Kohona said he thought Sri Lanka would be prepared to provide small numbers (e.g. 10-20 people) of military trainers to help build Afghan army capacity, if that would be useful. He pointed out that the Sri Lankan Army has 25 years of experience fighting the LTTE and countering the LTTE's constantly changing terrorist and insurgency tactics. Such experience might well be useful in Afghanistan. Recalling that Sri Lanka already has a peacekeeping battalion serving in the UN peacekeeping operation in Haiti, he speculated that Sri Lanka would likely be prepared to send more significant military forces in about one year, as operations against the LTTE continue to diminish.

¶3. (SBU) Embassy would be pleased to pursue either of these options if Department judges they could be useful. Please advise.

BLAKE